

Members of the Elon community, last week staff members of the Service Employees International Union organized a demonstration on our campus and filed a petition to form a labor union of non-tenure-track faculty members.

At Elon, we have never started meaningful discussions using bullhorns and carrying signs. Unfortunately, issues this group is concerned with had not been raised through Academic Council. Where all faculty including adjuncts have a voice. I have confidence in our strong shared governance system and our ability to work through issues together, which has resulted in the level of excellence Elon has achieved.

So, where do we go from here? And what comes next?

In the days and weeks ahead, you will likely hear arguments on both sides of the union question. There is a lot to consider and make no mistake these issues are important to every member of our community. What I ask, is that we agree to base our discussions on Elon's values. Taking the time, we need to hear everyone's concerns and not be rushed to a quick vote, like the timing of the union petition intentionally lays out at the busiest time of the semester for faculty and students.

Above all, we need to use and trust the systems we know have advanced excellence at Elon. We do not want to undermine our shared governance with a system in which outside lawyers negotiate our future and the ways we relate to one another. At many universities where unions exist this becomes a hostile and negative environment, creating delays and impasses.

In the past, when concerns have been raised about support for faculty and staff at Elon we have worked together, directly, to address those issues and unlike many other universities in the United States, through shared governance Elon has advanced over the last two decades. Increasing faculty pay and benefits substantially. Reducing class sizes and increasing instructional spending and we have all done this because we all agreed that students are at the center of our mission.

Shared governance is how I believe in addressing differences and I know it works. Provost Steven House and his staff are working to provide detailed and accurate information and data about faculty employment at Elon. He will share that with the community and I ask you to take the time to become well informed.

Our goal as always is to continue building a better stronger Elon for everyone. I simply do not believe a labor union will effectively support that goal. We have had tremendous success working together to create our own destiny. Let's give that proven system a chance on these issues as well.

Finally, while these can be contentious discussions I know the Elon community will be respectful and civil towards everyone regardless of their views. It is another one of the reasons I value this community.

Thank you, and best wishes as we work to conclude a very busy and historic semester.